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ABSTRACT

Studies that included either gender or race in assessing the nature of friendships for children and adolescents were reviewed. Findings indicate that a sex and race cleavage in friendships is evident from the preschool years and persists throughout adolescence. Girls have more reciprocated and intimate friendships than boys, especially during adolescence. Female friendships are oriented toward issues of loyalty and commitment whereas male friendships are dominated by achievement and status issues. Black and White children make more cross-race friendship choices in classrooms where they are in the minority; more same-race choices are made in racially balanced classrooms. Cross-race acceptance is more positive now than in the past, and Black and White students with similar backgrounds are more likely to get along than those who differ. Cooperative-learning teams can increase cross-race friendships in school settings. The contributions of women and minorities to the friendship literature have had a differential effect on its direction, with the former concerning themselves with both sex and race and the latter concentrating more on intergroup relations then close relationships. (Author/KH)

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Gender, Race, and Friendship Research

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RUNNING HEAD: Gender, Race and Friendship

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April, 1985.

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Abstract

Studies that included either gender or race in assessing the nature of friendships for children and adolescents were reviewed. Findings indicate that a sex and race cleavage in friendships is evident from the preschool years and persists throughout adolescence. Girls have more reciprocated and intimate friendships than boys, especially during adolescence. Female friendships are oriented toward issues of loyalty and commitment whereas male friendships are dominated by achievement and status issues. Black and white children make more cross-race friendship choices in classrooms where they are in the minority; more same-race choices are made in racially balanced classrooms. Cross-race acceptance is more positive now than in the past, and black and white students with similar backgrounds are more likely to get along than those who differ. Cooperative-learning teams can increase cross-race friendships in school settings. The contributions of women and minorities to the friendship literature and future research needs are briefly discussed.

Gender, Race, and Friendship Research

McGuire and Weisz (1982) defined friendship as an "ongoing reciprocal liking and behavioral involvement between two individuals" (p. 1479). Since 1970 there have been at least 10 major books discussing the friendships of children and adolescents (Asher & Gottman, 1981; Epstein & Karweit, 1983; Foot, Chapman, & Smith, 1980; Rubin, 1980) and numerous review articles (see Hartup, 1983). Gender and race are powerful variables that influence both the formation and stability of friendships. However, they have been integrated in different ways into the friendship literature. This paper will review those past studies that have included either gender or race as a variable in assessing the nature of friendships for children and adolescents. In addition, it will discuss the impact that women and minorities have had on friendship research and identify research questions for the future.

Gender

Research on sex differences in friendships has focused on the following: the extent of same-sex friendships, intimacy and social knowledge, personality and attitudinal similarity, reciprocity, and proximity. A discussion of the major sex differences from these areas will follow.

Same-Sex Friendships

Hartup (1978) stated that "except for chronological age, no characteristic is more extensively shared by friends than gender" (p. 158). A sex cleavage in friendships is evident from the preschool years and persists throughout adolescence. As early as the 1920s and 1930s researchers began to find few cross-sex friendships (Criswell, 1939; Seagoe, 1939) for children and adolescents. In 1932, Challman observed the actions of nursery school children ages 27 to 45 months. Same-sex groupings predominated their interactions with only one consistent cross-sex relationship existing. In a more recent study, Drewry and Clark (in press) found that 74% of the friendship choices made by preschoolers were same-sex.

Numerous studies have found that same-sex friendships prevail in elementary, junior high, and high school (Asher, Oden, & Gottman, 1977; Clark & Drewry, in press; Hallinan, 1979; Hallinan & Tuma, 1978; Schofield & Sagar, 1977; Singleton & Asher, 1979). Elementary school children make anywhere from 62% - 82% same-sex choices (Eder & Hallinan, 1978; Foot, Chapman, & Smith, 1980). Crockett, Losoff, and Petersen (1984) found that 97% of their junior high schoolers confided in same-sex friends and Hallinan (1979) observed no cross-sex members in cliques after observing 37 different junior high school classrooms. In addition, adolescents were more likely to use same-sex than cross-sex peers for cial

support (Burke & Weir, 1978) and spent more time interacting with same-sex peers (Schofield & Francis, 1982).

Several researchers have proposed that the sex cleavage in friendship selection increases during the elementary school years. However, findings are inconsistent. Singleton and Asher (1979) found no difference between the third and sixth-graders' ratings for sex of peers in work and play situations; children in both grades rated same-sex classmates higher than cross-sex peers. In contrast, Ladd and Oden (1979) found that fifth-graders rated more same-sex than cross-sex classmates for work and play activities than third graders. However, Clark and Drewry (1984) reported that 85% of their third and 83% of their sixth-grade dyads were same-sex. Although there was a slight grade level increase these figures were not statistically different. Similar results were obtained by Hallinan (1979) who found that 86% of her third grade and 94% of her sixth grade friendships were same-sex. Thus, preference for same-sex friends may not increase significantly from third through sixth grade, however, the sex cleavage is already strong by the third grade.

During early adolescence friendship choices remain sex segregated. Clark and Ayers (1985) found that 96% of the friendship choices made by seventh and eighth graders were same-sex. When cross-sex choices were made they were likely to be non-reciprocated. In addition, Asher, Oden, and Gottman (1977)

have noted that cross-sex friendships are unstable and do not last as long as same-sex friendships.

The high frequency of same-sex friendships has been explained in a number of ways. Dweck (1981) believes that same-sex friends are prevalent because boys and girls experience differential socialization and thus develop different interests and values. Girls spend their time in prosocial behaviors with small groups whereas boys participate in competitive games involving a larger number of peers. These different interaction styles begin during the preschool years and are reinforced during elementary and high school because of the structure and organization of schools, especially the nature of extracurricular activities. Dweck (1981) concluded that "early differences in values and interests lead to differing experiences and eventually to different world views and areas of competence" (p. 326).

Asher et al. (1977) believed that the prevalence of same-sex peers could be explained by the restricted interaction of boys and girls as a result of different interests. He reported low correlations between the top five interests listed for boys and girls. Ahser also noted that rigid sex-roles contributed to sex segregation and concluded that more cross-sex friendships would occur if boys and girls were socialized to have a wider range of interests.

Hartup (1983) has identified three variables that interact to form the basis for sex segregation: adult socialization patterns, differential play activities, and sex-role stereotypes. Boys and girls are socialized differently. Parents not only buy girls and boys different toys from infancy on but they also seek out same-sex playmates for their young children and thus direct the nature of peer interaction. Teachers continue the endorsement of sex segregation by supporting more same-sex than cross-sex interactions during the preschool and school-age years. In addition, boys and girls spend their playtime differently. Preschool boys spend more time playing with blocks and movable toys and play rougher than girls. Eventually preschoolers learn that the behaviors and interests of boys and girls should be different.

Sex differences in play patterns persist throughout elementary school. Lever (1972) found that fifth grade girls played in small intimate groups, mainly dyads. They played in private places and "mimicked primary human relationships instead of playing formal games". In contrast boys played in controlled and competitive situations that required interdependence between teammates and provided an arena for training in leadership skills. Lever concluded that "differences in leisure patterns of boys and girls lead to the development of particular social skills and capacities" (p. 484).

Karweit and Hansell (1983) noted that the structure of elementary classrooms influence friendship selection by facilitating and strengthening the development of male and female cultures. Traditional classrooms may provide differential reinforcement for male and female behaviors and encourage sex segregation by limiting cross-sex interactions.

Intimacy and Social Knowledge

In addition to the sex cleavage in friendships, there is some evidence to suggest that the structure of male and female friendships differ. It has been established that the intimacy level in female friendships exceeds that in male friendships (Berndt, 1982; Crockett, Losoff, & Petersen, 1984; Hunter & Youniss, 1982) during adolescence. Adolescent girls more often than do boys refer to intimate conversations with friends (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980), are more likely to assume that a person will confide in a friend (Mark & Alper, 1980), express greater anxiety about rejection by friends (Berndt, 1981b), feel closer to a friend (Crockett, Losoff, & Petersen, 1984) and report more intimate self-disclosure in general. Female friendships are thought to be oriented toward issues of loyalty, intimacy, and commitment (Berndt, 1982; Karweit & Hansell, 1983) whereas male friendships are dominated by achievement and status issues. Adolescent girls are more developmentally advanced in their friendship expectations (Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980) and have

higher levels of interpersonal competence than boys (Kurdek & Krile, 1982). Burke and Weir (1978) studied the adolescent social support system. Their data indicate that females are more likely than males to inform a peer when they are having problems, feel free to discuss more of their problems with peers, and are more satisfied with their close relationships. In addition, girls were more likely to choose same-sex peers as their major source of social support whereas boys selected fathers, which is consistent with past research (Curtis, 1975).

Girls of all ages have smaller, more exclusive friendships than boys (see Berndt, 1981; Hartup, 1982; Ladd, 1983), and adolescent girls report being more attached than boys to their same-sex friends (Bee & Mitchell, 1984). According to data from Diaz and Berndt (1982) fourth and eighth grade girls knew more than boys about their best friend's external characteristics (i.e., telephone number, birthdate, parents' names), reported being friends for a longer time, and were more attracted to their best friends. However, there were no sex differences on knowledge of internal characteristics of best friends. Additional studies have reported that girls express a greater desire to share with close friends than boys (Berndt, 1981a), and boys compete more with their friends than girls (Skarin & Moely, 1976).

The relationships of boys are thought to be dominated by sharing activities instead of disclosing feelings and boys have

more friends and a looser social network than girls. For example, Eder and Hallinan (1978) studied the formation of new friends in elementary school children. Using the longitudinal approach they assessed the changes in triadic relationships over time. They found that female triads consisted of a single dyadic friendship which excluded the third member. As the school year progressed the number of female dyads that were structured in this manner increased. However boys' friendship choices became more nonexclusive or remained the same as the year progressed. Lever (1972) collected qualitative information on fifth grade friendships and found that girls more than boys: 1) feel more comfortable in pairs and least comfortable in groups of four or more, 2) could identify a single best friend whom they interacted with almost daily, 3) become aware of the moods of their best friend, 4) show affection toward their best friend, 5) share secrets with best friends and if their confidentiality is broken the friendship is likely to dissolve. Based on these and other findings, Karweit and Hansell (1983) have concluded that "females are concerned with developing interpersonal skills which are best practiced in dyadic relationships. Males, however, are more concerned with developing autonomy and independence, best worked out in a larger group context" (p. 119).

Personality and Attitudinal Similarity

Some studies have assessed the degree of similarity that exists between adolescent friends. In some cases sex differences have existed. For example, Wellman (1926) found that female close friends were more similar than male close friends in their grade-point average and degree of extraversion and less similar than male friends in age and height. More recently Clark and Ayers (1985) reported that male friends were more similar than female friends on their level of satisfaction with and commitment to their best friend and on several status variables (i.e., nominations for neatness and nicest clothes). Female friends were more similar than male friends on a number of personality variables and their general level of intelligence. In addition, females expressed a higher level of commitment to their best friend than male adolescents (Ayers & Clark, 1985). In a different study, female cliques appeared to be more similar than male cliques in values, attitudes, and behaviors (Cohen, 1977).

Reciprocity

Mutual friendships are more common among girls than boys. Girls have more cliques (i.e., a group of four or more persons in which at least two are involved in a mutual choice relationship) (Cohen, 1977), and adolescent and preadolescent females have more reciprocated friendships than do boys (Eder & Hallinan, 1978; Epstein, 1983a; Hansell, 1981; Lundberg & Dickson, 1952; Spurgeon,

Hicks, & Terry, 1983). In addition, the number of female reciprocal relationships increases with age (Epstein, 1983a).

Proximity

Children and adolescents tend to select close friends from peers who are in their classrooms, live in the same neighborhood, or those who are involved in similar extracurricular activities. Past researchers have proposed that proximity helps to facilitate friendship formation by increasing contact (Festinger, Schacter, & Back, 1950) or that proximity increases familiarity which in turn generates attraction (Berscheid & Walster, 1983). Adolescent girls spend more time than boys talking on the phone to their best friends each day (Crockett, Losoff, & Petersen, 1984) and their time spent talking to friends increases from sixth to eighth grade. Boys come into more contact with their good friends at non-school activities (see also Jenkins, 1931). Girls have more in-school contact with friends in student government and service clubs while boys have their greatest contact with close friends through involvement in sports (Karweit, 1983). Females were found to participate in more extracurricular activities than males by Hansell and Karweit (1983). However, males and females in the college curriculum were involved in a number of extracurricular activities, which increased their opportunities to meet new friends.

Race

The treatment of race in the friendship literature differs greatly from that of gender. Race has been included in friendship studies mainly to assess interracial acceptance or the prevalence of same and cross-race friendships in schools of varying racial composition. A large body of literature has attempted to assess the effect that desegregation has on interracial attitudes and relationships in school settings.

Same-Race Friendships

The most consistent finding concerning the influence of race on friendship selection is that both black and white children of all ages prefer friends that are of the same race. Criswell (1939) asked elementary school children to identify their best friends. Seventy five percent of the choices made were same-race. In subsequent research black and white children at the preschool (Drewry & Clark, in press), elementary school (Asher, 1973; Asher, et al., 1977; Clark & Drewry, in press; Koslin, Koslin, Pargament, & Waxman, 1972; Shaw, 1973; Tuma & Hallinan, 1979), and junior high school levels (Clark & Ayers, 1985; Schofield, 1981) selected friends that were of the same race. The adolescents in the Clark and Ayers' (1985) study made 80% same-race friendship selections. As noted by Asher, et al. (1977), cross-race friendships do appear with black children making more cross-race friend selections than their white

counterparts (Hartup, 1970; Hartup, 1978). Asher's study (1973, cited in Asher et. al., 1977) reported that 18% of his white children's friendship selections and 44% of the black children's selections were cross-race. In addition, Shaw (1973) found that 33% of the black children made cross-race selections whereas only 6% of the white children selected black children as friends. These findings imply that black children may have more nonreciprocal relationships than their white counterparts.

The black-white proportion within a classroom may influence the degree to which interracial friendships occur. Hallinan (1982) studied classroom racial composition and friendship selection in classrooms that were majority white (67% to 88% white), majority black (67% to 89% black), and racially balanced (38% to 60% black). In majority black classsrooms 30% of the white choices were same-race and 70% were interracial. In majority white classrooms the figures are identical for black choices (30% same-race, 70% interracial). In racially balanced classrooms more same-race friendships were selected by both black and white children (black, 70% black & 30% white; white, 61% white, 39% black). Thus, black children make more cross-race friendship choices when they are in predominantly white classrooms and white children make more cross-race friendship choices when they are in predominantly black classrooms. In racially balanced classrooms more same-race choices are made. These findings help

to clarify an earlier statement by McPartland (1968) that "as the proportion of students from other races increases in a student's classes, the proportion of those who have close friends outside their own race increases" (p. 236).

Longshore (1982) found an inverted-U relationship between cross-race friendliness and school racial composition. White students were more hostile toward their black peers in schools that had a black population between 40 to 60%; supporting Hallinan's data for the racially balanced classrooms. Longshore concluded that "intergroup hostility is highest in racially balanced schools, i.e., schools where neither group is clearly in control" (p. 73).

Black children who are the minority in desegregated classrooms may have some difficulty in finding peers who will reciprocate their friendship choices. If they are not attracted to their available same-race peers they must seek out interracial friendships. In some cases these black students will develop adequate interracial friendships however, it is possible that their white friends will not reciprocate their liking or black children may be befriended by white children who are themselves rejected by their white peers. Based on the data of Hallinan (1982), in majority white classes black children made 70% cross-race choices but white children made only 15% cross-race choices. Thus, black children are likely to have non-reciprocal

relationships if they are attending predominantly white schools (i.e., less than 38% black population). Miller (1983) has suggested that minority children in desegregated classrooms need an adequate support group of same-race peers to avoid feeling threatened and experiencing adjustment problems. Epstein (1983a) found that students without reciprocated or stable friends felt more stressed than those with stable or reciprocated friendships. Past data suggest that the majority white school environment may not provide an adequate support base, especially when one takes into account that many teachers are prejudiced and provide little support for the minority child.

Interracial Acceptance

Interracial acceptance has been assessed before and after desegregation with conflicting findings (see Carithers, 1970; St. John, 1975). Some have argued that desegregation increased racial cleavage (Armor, 1972) and did not result in positive racial contact but this view has been criticized (Pettigrew, Useem, Normand, & Smith, 1973). Others have painted a picture of black children in desegregated classrooms as aggressive, antisocial, low achieving (Singer, cited in Carter, Carter, & Benson, 1980), or "ill-prepared for life in a mixed high school" (St. John, 1964). Glidewell, Kantor, Smith, and Stringer (1966) tried to explain supposed black aggressive behavior as the result of black children being less healthy, less intelligent, lacking in interpersonal skills, and from a lower class than their white peers. Anderson

(cited in Carter et al., 1980) reported that desegregated black children in grades 4 to 6 had higher antisocial attitude scores than segregated blacks. Some studies have emphasized the importance of academic achievement for social status (Glidewell, et al., 1966), concluding that the black children's lower class status results from their poor academic performance. In addition, St. John (1964) blamed black elementary schools for not adequately preparing black students to compete academically in integrated high schools. Many researchers have concluded that the alienation experienced by black students resulted from their inability to meet the white middle class standards (Ausabel & Ausabel, 1963; Katz, 1968). Pettigrew (1968) added that black children in these predominantly white environments wanted acceptance from their white peers but were frustrated because they could not keep up socially or academically and thus responded with antisocial behavior.

The major limitation of the 1960 studies is that they reflect a narrow-minded appraisal of the social climate in desegregated classrooms. Many erroneous assumptions were made about black children ranging from their desire to emulate their white peers to their lack of social skills. The conclusions seem to "blame the victim" for not being accepted by white peers and thoroughly overlooks the role of racism in the social environment of schools. Another limitation with this body of research is that it

chose to focus on the correlates of popularity (i.e., social acceptance) and not friendship mutuality. Popularity is assessed by the number of friendship choices that one receives. However, friendship research is more concerned with understanding the structure and quality of friendships instead of the number of friends that a child has within a classroom. Being popular is less important in a child's overall social development than the ability of each child to develop close relationships. Hartup (1975) has cautioned that factors thought to predict popularity may not predict mutuality in friendships. The desegregation research of the 1960s and early 1970s tells us very little about the close relationships that exist in desegregated classrooms.

Recent studies have presented a different view of interracial acceptance. Singleton and Asher (1979) assessed interracial acceptance by asking third and sixth graders to rate each classmate as someone they would like to play with or work with. Children did indicate own-race preferences in their selections but own-sex preferences were much more prevalent. In addition, children gave positive ratings to their cross-race peers. Black children became more ethnocentric than white children in their choices from third to sixth grade. Singleton and Asher interpretated their data as reflecting "a more positive picture of cross-race acceptance over age than has been obtained in previous research" (p. 940).

Carter, DeTine, Spero, and Benson (1975) found that during junior high school black subjects selected both black and white peers as satisfying their needs for achievement recognition (academic acceptance). However, black students preferred black peers to satisfy their needs for social acceptance. White adolescents preferred white peers for the fulfillment of their needs for both social and academic acceptance. Nevertheless, sex and grade point average were better predictors of academic and social acceptance than race for blacks and whites.

Interracial Contact

Interracial contact of school children has also been a topic investigated in desegregation research. Black and white students select to sit next to same-sex peers when voluntary seating arrangements are employed. Some studies have indicated that girls are more ethnocentric in their peer interactions than boys (Schofield & Francis, 1977; Schofield & Sagar, 1977; Singleton & Asher, 1979). In addition, black children are twice as likely as white students to initiate interracial interaction (Sagar, Schofield, & Snyder, 1983).

Patchen, Davidson, Hofmann, and Brown (1977) conducted a large scale study to determine the factors that influence interracial behavior and attitudinal changes for high school students. A number of significant findings were reported. Black and white students with positive cross-race attitudes reported more positive

interracial contact than adolescents with negative attitudes. Aggressive students (black and white) reported more negative cross-race interactions than less aggressive students. Thus, students who were hostile towards their cross-race peers showed a general pattern of hostile interactions with same-race peers. Aggressive students also were likely to have negative cross-race attitudes. White boys reported more unfriendly contact with and were more apt to avoid black students than white girls. White boys reported thinking that they would be attacked by black students more frequently than white females. Black students who possessed similar values to those held by white students were more likely to get along with whites.

White students who experienced positive cross-race interactions in elementary school reported friendly interracial contacts in high school. Proximity to other-race students and participation in school activities increased interracial contact and friendships. In addition, the more positive the racial attitudes of family and peers the greater the cross-race interaction of these students. Patchen et al., concluded that negative interracial behavior resulted from aggressive behavioral patterns, prior racial attitudes, and the racial attitudes of family and peers. Positive interracial behavior depended upon prior attitudes and the opportunity for cross-race interactions.

Attempts to determine the extent to which interracial contact can enhance the academic performance of black students have resulted in conflicting findings. Lewis and St. John (1974) found that the greatest predictors of grade-point average for black sixth grade females were GPAs in grades 1-5 and popularity with white girls. The predictors for black boys were similar but popularity with white same-sex peers was not as strong of a predictor as it was for black girls. In contrast, Patchen, Hofmann, and Brown (1980) reported that "the impact of interracial contact on academic outcomes for blacks was small" (p. 33).

Cooperative-learning teams have been used to increase the number of cross-race friendships in school settings (Slavin, 1979; Weigel, Wiser, & Cook, 1975). Hansell and Slavin (1981) found that those students who worked in cooperative interracial teams made and received more cross-race choices than those without interracial team contact. These cross-race choices were most often mutual and strong instead of nonmutual and weak. However, in a more recent study by Hansell (1984) using a different methodology, cross-race ties were most often weak relationships. The cooperative group experienced increased weak cross-race friendship choices but not an increase in strong cross-race ties. Hansell noted that any intervention that can increase weak interracial ties can potentially improve intergroup relations. The weak cross-race ties may help to bring together white and black peer groups.

Cooperative-learning teams do not always result in greater cross-race friendships or more positive cross-race attitudes. Weigl, Wiser, and Cook (1975) compared classrooms using the whole-class method of instruction to classes using a small-group method, consisting of interracial teams of 4 to 6 students. Classes taught by the small-group method had less cross-race conflict and more cross-race helping than the traditional classrooms. White students in cooperative interracial teams gave Mexican-American peers more desirable ratings than whites in the traditional classrooms. However, the white ratings of black peers were not enhanced by contact in the cooperative teams.

Desegregation has placed together black and white children with different social backgrounds and thus different values, attitudes, likes and dislikes (St. John, 1975). According to Allport (1954) contact between ethnic groups would reduce racial prejudice and promote interracial friendships if the contact was prolonged, occurred between those of equal status, and was sanctioned by those in authority roles. In desegregated schools racial contact is not always prolonged because black and white students are often separated within classrooms according to academic performance. Black and white students are rarely matched in social backgrounds because a disproportionate number of black Americans are located in the lower social class. In addition, school teachers and principals may practice differential treatment

of black and white students. Thus, desegregation has had little effect on reducing ethnocentric friendship choices. However cooperative intervention techniques do appear to be useful in increasing interracial contact and acceptance.

Black Friendships

Few researchers have been interested in studying the close relationships of black children and adolescents. Tuma and Hallinan (1979) found that "black children tend to form and maintain friendships more readily than nonblack children" (p. 1264). However their classrooms were predominantly black and many black children in desegregated schools are in predominantly white classrooms. Clark and Ayers (1985) studied racial differences in the similarity of early adolescent friends. Black friends had more similar personalitities and attractiveness levels than white friends who were more similar in intelligence. Black friends were more likely to live in walking distance of their selected best friends and they spent more time outside of school with their friends than white or cross-race dyads. White friends saw each other more often than black friends in class or at church. Black students spent more time than white students each week with their best friends and black males spent significantly more time with their best friends than black females or white students. In addition, white males expressed more friendship satisfaction than

the white females or black students (Ayers & Clark, 1985). More research is needed to assess the nature of same-race relationships in black populations.

Contributions of Women and Minorities

Women and minorities have had a differential effect on the direction that friendship research has taken. Women have been involved in shaping the course of friendship research from the very beginning. Criswell (1939), St. John (1964), Carithers (1970), Hallinan (1979), Schofield (1981), Epstein (1983a), and Karweit (1983) are examples of women who have contributed significantly to our understanding of friendships. Their involvement has been influential in incorporating gender as an important variable in the friendship research. Many of these women have not only concerned themselves with the issue of sex but they have also focused on race. In contrast, minorities have had little impact on the direction of friendship research. Consequently there is little known about the close relationships of black or other minority children. Female researchers in the past have contributed to the stereotype of black children as aggressive, antisocial, and incapable of entering into friendships with their white peers (see St. John, 1963). Even in recent research there is still the tendency for some female researchers to support the notion that black children are aggressive and hassle white children in desegregated schools (see Schofield,

1981) without emphasizing the confounding of race and social class. However, writings by some researcher (see Epstein, 1983b) do show a sensitivity to the race and social class dilemma. Minorities have made some contributions to the desegregation literature, however, there has been more interest in intergroup relations than close relationships. More minorities are needed to give a different perspective to friendship research and to direct this area toward a better understanding of the nature of close relationships for minority children and adolescents.

Future Research Needs

Although there are numerous studies on some aspect of friendship relations in children and adolescents, there are areas where data is sparse. The following are recommendations for future research.

1. Few studies have assessed the nature of friendship similarity in elementary school children and findings are inconsistent for adolescent populations. Future research should investigate the nature of friendship similarity paying particular attention to the effects of the race and sex of a friendship dyad.

2. Greater emphasis should be placed on school structure variables (e.g., size, racial composition, instructional styles, curricular and extracurricular offerings) and their influence on friendship formation.

3. The nature of same-race friendships should be assessed in desegregated classrooms in addition to the focus on interracial relationships. We have yet to know if desegregation altered the nature of same-race friendships.

4. A special effort is needed to assess black friendships in school and nonschool settings instead of generalizing from studies that focused on assessing intergroup relations of middle class white and low income black children.

5. Future research should look at gender by race interactions in their study of friendships in desegregated classrooms.

6. Social class must become a more prevalent variable in the friendship literature.

7. Longitudinal research is needed to assess the degree to which friendship reciprocity, similarity, and proximity change with age, incorporating sex and race of friendship dyads.

8. More research is needed on friendship formation in non-school settings.

9. Findings and theories from the areas of social psychology, developmental psychology, and sociology of education must be integrated before an understanding of factors that influence friendship selection and stability can be achieved.

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